

Papiamentu reduplication

Silvia Kouwenberg

Introduction

Papiamentu is spoken natively by approximately 250,000 people, the majority of them in the Caribbean islands Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, some 30,000 in the Netherlands and several thousand in the small eastern Caribbean member islands of the Netherlands Antilles (St Maarten, St Eustatius, Saba). Although Portuguese was an important early influence in its formation (Goodman, 1987; Smith, 1987), the main lexifier of Papiamentu has undoubtedly been Spanish. Despite its status as the official language of the territories in which Papiamentu is spoken, Dutch has been a fairly minor contributor to Papiamentu lexicon and grammar (see Kouwenberg & Murray, 1994; Wood, 1970).

Papiamentu reduplication has previously been documented in Maurer (1988)¹ and Dijkhoff (1993:93-96). In addition to drawing on these sources, data for this brief overview are mainly taken from a collection of folk-tales (Geerdink-Jesurun Pinto, 1965, referenced as *Nanzi*).

Although, as will be seen below, reduplication applies productively to several word classes, it is a rather infrequent phenomenon in Papiamentu texts. The folk-tales known as *Kwenta di Nanzi* [story of Anancy] 'Anancy stories' are by far the best source for reduplications, and even there, their occurrence is limited. A perusal of a sizable collection of different text types (Berry-Haseth, Broek & Joubert, 1998) yielded mainly occurrences of semi-lexicalized forms *poko-poko* [bit-bit] 'quietly, slowly' and *mei-mei (di)* [half-half (of)] 'in the middle (of)'.

The following overview considers reduplicative processes which affect adjectives and adverbs with an intensifying effect (§1, 2), the reduplication of verbs with an iterative reading (§3), the reduplication of nouns with a plural and distributive effect (§4), and the reduplication of words of different classes with a distributive effect (§5). These reduplications all have in common that they preserve the category of the base, as well as its semantic and phonological properties. That verb reduplication of this type is possible is perhaps doubtful, however. We then turn to reduplication which creates mostly deverbal and deadjectival nouns and where the semantic changes involved are frequently indicative of lexicalization (§6).

1 Intensifying reduplication of adjectives

Papiamentu applies reduplication productively to adjectives, where it expresses intensification. Reduplicated adjectives are illustrated here heading a copular predicate (1) and heading a secondary predicate (2). Where appropriate, a reduplicated adjective may be followed by a PP complement (1).²

¹Maurer (1988) focuses largely on reduplicated forms which can be considered lexicalized, as well as on reduplications which are not derivable, and which may provide evidence of African lexical sources. Reduplicated forms of the second type are not our concern here.

²The data sources use a variety of spellings; where necessary, these have adapted to the spelling conventions which have been adopted in Curaçao and Bonaire.

- (1) *E renbak ta yen-yen di awa*
the gutter COP full-full of water
‘The gutter is overflowing’ (Nanzi, 44)
- (2) *Mes ora baka a kai morto-morto abao na swela*
same hour cow PERF fall dead-dead down LOC floor
‘The cow immediately dropped dead on the floor’ (Nanzi, 75)

A small number of Papiamentu adjectives may appear in a prenominal modifying position, where they carry special affective readings, in contrast with their normal postnominal use. In that prenominal position, reduplication is excluded. These adjective-noun combinations possibly have a quasi-compound status; this would make the adjective ineligible as input to morphological processes.

In (3), the prenominal form *mal* also contrasts with postnominal *malu* in having a phonologically reduced form. Compare the acceptability of reduplication of postnominal *malu* with the unacceptability of reduplication of prenominal *mal*:

- (3) a. *un mucha malu / un mucha malu-malu*
a child sick
- b. *un mal mucha / *un mal-mal mucha*
‘a bad child’ / attempted reading: ‘a really bad child’ (i.e. ill-behaved)

2 Intensifying reduplication of adverbs

Reduplication of adverbs, like reduplication of adjectives, is associated with an intensifying interpretation. Note that the reduplicated adverb is followed by a PP complement in (4). (6) illustrates reduplication of an adverbial quantifier:

- (4) *Nanzi tambe a grita parew-parew ku nan*
Anancy also PERF cry similar-similar with 3P
‘Anancy also cried just like them’ (Nanzi, 23)
- (5) *Nan a drenta manera di kustumber ketu-ketu*
3P PERF enter like of habit quiet-quiet
‘They went in real quiet as usual’ (Nanzi, 63)
- (6) *Hambrá manera e tabata el a komé tur-tur*
hungry like 3S PAST.COP 3S perf eat-3S all-all
‘Hungry as he was, he ate it completely’ (Nanzi, 17)

3 Iterative reduplication of verbs

Reduplicated verbs are not attested in any of the texts. Dijkhoff cites two cases of reduplicated verbs with a reading of iterated activity; she refers to them as having an intensifying function (7). Verb reduplication constitutes an obvious area for further research.

- (7) *mishi-mishi* [touch-touch] ‘to touch constantly’
bula-bula [jump-jump] ‘to jump about all the time’

4 “Plural” reduplication of nouns

Dijkhoff characterizes the reduplication of nouns as resulting in a reading involving an accumulation of occurrences of the object. This is clearly illustrated here:

- (8) *Anochi el a sinta korta e kweru ku su santu pasenshi na repi-repi*
 night 2S PERF sit cut the skin with 3S.POSS holy patience LOC strip-strip
 ‘At night he sat and patiently cut the skin into numerous strips’ (Nanzi, 46)

Dijkhoff (p93) and Maurer (p99) also cite the forms in (9). That these reduplications do not involve simple plurals is seen from the secondary connotation of scattering which is evident in the glosses. Thus, these reduplicated forms contrast with plural forms *e flor nan* [the flower PL] ‘the flowers’ etc.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| (9) <i>flor / flor-flor</i> | ‘flower’ / ‘flowers (for example scattered on a surface)’ |
| <i>pipita / pipita-pipita</i> | ‘grain’ / ‘grains (for example of cooked rice)’ |
| <i>blòki / blòki-blòki</i> | ‘block, cube’ / ‘small squares’ |
| <i>bala / bala-bala</i> | ‘ball, bullet’ / ‘a design or pattern of repeated circles’ |
| <i>lapi / lapi-lapi</i> | ‘scrap (of cloth)’ / ‘small scraps (of cloth)’ |
| <i>pida / pida-pida</i> | ‘piece’ / ‘small pieces’ |

In addition, reduplicated nouns are attested in adverbial functions:

- (10) *Ora e soldá nan a kita eyfó, el a lanta pia-pia bai kas*
 time the soldier PL PERF remove there-from 3S PERF get-up foot-foot go house
 ‘When the soldiers had left, he got up and went home foot by foot’ (Nanzi, 450)

5 Distributive reduplication

Quantity nouns (11) and numerals (12) can be reduplicated with a distributive adverbial interpretation:

- (11) *Poko-poko su sinti a kuminsa traha*
 little-little 3S.POSS sense PERF begin work
 ‘Bit by bit, his senses returned to him’ (Nanzi, 12)
- (12) *... i komo prueba di nan desakuerso nan lo a hala bai unu-unu*
 and like proof of 3P disapproval 3P IRR PERF move go one-one
 ‘...and as proof of their disapproval, they would leave one at a time’ (Juliana, 1998:41)

In the following example, reduplication of the preposition *ariba* also has a distributive reading:

- (13) *El a pasa su man ariba-ariba né*
 3S PERF pass 3S.POSS hand on-on 3S
 ‘He touched it all over’ [lit. ‘he passed his hands all over it’] (Nanzi, 11)

6 Other derivable reduplications

Dijkhoff (1993:94) notes two patterns of stress assignment in Papiamentu reduplications:

- (i) The members of a reduplication each retain their individual stress.
- (ii) Main stress is assigned to the righthand member of the reduplication. This follows the pattern for compound stress assignment in Papiamentu.³

The first pattern holds for all reduplicative processes discussed in the preceding, processes which produce forms with intensified and iterative meanings. In the second category, we find

³Papiamentu uses tone as well as stress as prominence markers. Usually, a high tone coincides with primary or secondary stress. That is true for the forms surveyed here. Stress and pitch interactions in Papiamentu are described in Kouwenberg & Murray (1994) and Kouwenberg (forthc).

reduplicated forms such as the deadjectival, deverbal, and denominal nouns and one denominal adjective (from Dijkhoff, 1993:95, Maurer, 1988, Maduro, 1969):

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| (14) <i>fini / fini-fini</i> | 'fine, small' / 'fine cactus hairs' |
| <i>moli / moli-moli</i> | 'soft' / 'plant species (carries a small soft fruit)' |
| <i>chupa / chupa-chupa</i> | 'to suck' / 'blood sucker species' |
| <i>pika / pika-pika</i> | 'to sting' / 'jelly fish' |
| <i>pega / pega-pega</i> | 'to stick' / 'gecko' |
| <i>tembla / tembla-tembla</i> | 'to shiver' / 'shivers' |
| <i>bleki / bleki-bleki</i> | 'tin can' / 'game (in which a tin can is used)' |
| <i>kima / kima-kima</i> | 'to burn' / 'sea urchin' |
| <i>karamèlè / mèlè-mèlè</i> | 'caramel' / 'sticky' |
| <i>frio / frio-frio</i> | 'cold' / 'crushed ice' |
| <i>washi / washi-washi</i> | 'washboard' / 'groggy (like the curves in a washboard)' |

These semantically (somewhat) opaque reduplications contrast with the transparent ones discussed in the preceding sections. Thus, *fini-fini* 'very fine' (with individual stress on each occurrence of *fini*) contrasts with *fini-fini* 'fine cactus hairs' (with main stress assigned to the righthand *fini*). Dijkhoff introduces an orthographic contrast whereby reduplicated forms such as those in (12) are written as single words, without a dash, a convention which stresses their status as forms which are not productively derivable. The semantic changes effected by the reduplication tend to be in the category "object or animal characterized by...".

In noun reduplications such as those in (15), the members each carry individual stress, falling into stress pattern (i) (Dijkhoff, p95). Like the forms in (14), these reduplicated forms contrast with the semantically transparent forms of §1-5. Different from the forms in (14), they are not distinguished by their stress pattern. They may have evolved out of the use of nouns as (manner) adverbs ('like bones / knives' etc):

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| (15) <i>wesu / wesu-wesu</i> | 'bone' / 'very thin, all bones' |
| <i>kuchú / kuchú-kuchú</i> | 'knife' / 'sharply opposed to one another's opinions' |
| <i>blét / blét-blét</i> | 'razor' / 'sharp' (said of dress, cars, etc) |
| <i>pushi / pushi-pushi</i> | 'cat' / 'quietly, silently' |
| <i>zeta / zeta-zeta</i> | 'oil' / 'very oily' |
| <i>palu / palu-palu</i> | 'wood' / 'pure wood' |

- (16) *Nos dos amigo a drenta pushi-pushi den kurá i nan a horta un karné gordo*
 2P two friend PERF enter cat-cat inside yard and 3P perf steal a goat fat
 'Our two friends silently entered the yard and stole a fat goat' (Nanzi, 63)

The complex preposition *mei-mei di* 'in the middle of' does not derive from a prepositional base:

- (17) *a lanta for di mei-mei di e trahado nan un hòmber konosí ku nòmber di bas*
 PERF get-up from of half-half of the worker PL a man known with name of boss
 'from among the workers emerged a man known by the name "boss"' (Fray, 1998:226)

The following intriguing example of a reduplicated numeral involves an idiomatic reading:

- (18) *Nanzi a yora awa kwater-kwater*
 Anancy PERF cry water four-four
 'Anancy cried earnestly' (Nanzi, 6)

7 Final remarks

Although Dijkhoff (p96) submits that only monosyllabic and bisyllabic words reduplicate, she also points to quite a few exceptions: *chikitu* ‘small’ > *chikitu-chikitu* ‘very small’, *burachi* ‘drunk’ > *burachi-burachi* ‘very drunk’, *bibitu* ‘alive’ > *bibitu-bibitu* ‘very lively’. That trisyllabic forms are really excluded from reduplicative processes seems doubtful, therefore.

Reduplication in Papiamentu normally involves full copying. Maurer (1988:95) cites the form *mèlè-mèlè* ‘sticky’ as deriving from *karamèlè* ‘caramel’. While this constitutes an obvious case of reduction, it is the only example of this type, and it clearly constitutes a lexicalized form. Among the more transparent reduplications, reduced reduplicants are encountered in *kishikishi* ‘itching sensation’ (< *kishiki* ‘to itch’) and in *chikí-chikitu* ‘very small’. The latter alternates with *chikito-chikito* and *chikí-chikí*; this reflects the fact that the simplex form *chikitu* itself alternates with *chikí*, suggesting that the reduplications do not involve any real reduction. This leaves *kishikishi* as the only true case of a reduced reduplication.

References

- Berry-Haseth, Lucille, Broek, Aart G & Joubert, Sidney M (eds) 1998 *Pa saka kara. Antologia di literature Papiamentu* [Vol 2]. Willemstad, Curaçao: Fundashon Pierre Laufer.
- Dijkhoff, Marta B 1993 *Papiamentu word formation*. University of Amsterdam dissertation.
- Fray, Manuel A 1998 Un yiu di pueblo [fragmento]. In Berry-Haseth et al., 226-230.
- Geerdink-Jesurun Pinto, N.M 1965 *Cuentanan di Nanzi*. Curaçao: Stichting Jeugdcentrale Curaçao.
- Goodman, Morris 1987 The Portuguese element in the American Creoles. Gilbert, Glenn (ed) *Pidgin and Creole languages: Essays in memory of John E Reinecke*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 361-405.
- Juliana, Elis 1998 Origen di baile di tambu na Korsou. In: Berry-Haseth et al., 38-46.
- Kouwenberg, Silvia forthc. The grammatical function of Papiamentu tone. *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*.
- Kouwenberg, Silvia & Murray, Eric 1994 *Papiamentu* [Languages of the world / Materials 68]. München: Lincom Europa.
- Maduro, Antoine J 1969 *Proverbio-, refran-, dicho- i expreshonnan Papiamentu i nan nifikashon na Ulandes*. [2nd ed.] Curaçao: Drukkerij Scherpenheuvel.
- Maurer, Philippe 1988 Les réitérations et reduplications lexicalisées du Papiamentu: Influence du substrat Africain? Boretzky, N, Enninger, W & Stolz, Th (eds) *Bochum-Essener Beiträge zur Sprachwandelforschung*. Bochum: Brockmeyer, 95-118.
- Smith, Norval S 1987 *The genesis of the Creole languages of Surinam*. University of Amsterdam dissertation.
- Wood, Richard E 1970 *Papiamentu: Dutch contributions*. Indiana University dissertation.